

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SPACE SCIENCE BOARD

1 December 1961

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
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School of Medicine
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Palo Alto, California

Dear Josh:

One of the important objectives of our last meeting was to arrive at recommendations on the best way to reorient the Board in the light of the present national space effort. I feel that we came to some general agreements although there was not time for a thorough discussion of every point that I had raised with you in my memorandum of 3 November 1961.

In order to proceed promptly, I have taken the liberty of formulating the enclosed draft of a memorandum to Dr. Bronk on our suggestions for the future objectives and composition of the Board in light of the rapid evolution of the national space objectives and the reorganization of NASA. However, until Dr. Bronk can consider and act upon our recommendations the Board must continue to function in its customary way.

The Board has had several years of experience and, I believe, has contributed very significantly to the advance of our national space program. Therefore, the evolution of the Board to the further fulfillment of our national needs is a matter of significance, and your suggestions toward the final memorandum are of great importance. In particular, I look to Chairmen of Committees -- especially those whose work seems essentially complete -- to comment further in the light of the proposals herein advanced.

There is no question in my mind of the importance and need for the Board. I was very happy that both Wiesner and Webb were able to be with us on November 12; our discussion with them was, in my opinion, most useful. But quite aside from this discussion, I know from many private conversations with both of them how significant they think the Board is.

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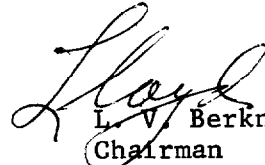
With respect to the summer study, I am informed that Jim Van Allen is willing to chair this program, feeling that he will have completed his assignment on the role of the universities. I am sure I express the unanimous feeling of the Board in our pleasure that Van Allen is willing to take on this important task. I have strongly recommended that Dr. Bronk accept his generous offer, especially in view of its vital national importance.. Details as to the summer study will have to be worked out promptly after Dr. Bronk authorizes it, and I hope that a few of us can meet in the near future with Van and Homer Newell to plan a tentative outline of the program.

I have conveyed to Dr. Bronk my intention to vacate the chairmanship of the Board upon its reorganization. To permit an orderly transition, I have agreed to retain the chairmanship until a new Chairman is appointed, but no later than June 1, 1962. I strongly invite your recommendations (if you have several, please give them in preferred order) for a new Chairman, for I know Dr. Bronk will want our advice.

Your detailed comments and suggestions are invited so that the memorandum can be put in final form. Should there be substantive differences in view, I would be glad to call another meeting of the present Board so that these can be examined in detail, but I would hope that our views are already sufficiently consolidated to permit formulation of the final memo by correspondence.

Your early reply will be welcomed.

Yours sincerely,


L. V. Berkner
Chairman

Enclosure

P.S. I hope, Josh, that you will read the enclosed proposed memo to Dr. Bronk very carefully for I shall value your opinions and suggestions. In particular, of course, I hope you will scrutinize my references to you personally and your work with the Board.

I look forward to receiving any suggestions you wish to make on any part of this memo. I urge, however, that you let me have these promptly for I feel that Dr. Bronk must move rapidly in deciding upon the future activities and organization of the Board.

L.V.B.